

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd in

14

L O N D O N

January 16th 1715

On Occasion of the

D R E A D F U L F I R E

Which began in *Thames-street*, on *Thursday*
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By JOHN EVANS.



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MICAH VI. 9.

The LORD's Voice crieth unto the City ; and the Man of Wisdom shall see thy Name : hear ye the Rod, and who hath appointed it.



IN these Words of the Prophet I would bespeak your Pious Attention to that awful Warning of Divine Providence which has so lately fill'd your Thoughts, since GOD has now made them applicable to London, as of old to Jerusalem.

THE general Scope of this Book is given us in the Title prefix'd to the whole Prophecy, Chap. i. 1. *The Word of the LORD that came to*

A

Micah

Micah the Morasthite in the Days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Jotham was one of the middle sort of Judah's Kings. He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD; according to all that his Father Uzziah had done. He did not abandon himself to gross Idolatry. But the high places were not remov'd. The Remains of Superstition were not cast out. Ahaz was one of the Worst: And his Son Hezekiah one of the brightest Characters in the Jewish History. Such a difference of Times God's Ministers as well as others are call'd to pass thro'.

2 Kings xv. 34, 35.

2 Kings xvi. 3, 4.

THRO' this whole Book, which contains the Sum or principal Part of the Messages that Micah had in Commission, we find an intermixture of Promises and Threatnings. In the worst Times he had Comfort to preach to the Righteous: And in the Best was charg'd with melancholy Tidings to ill Men.

THE Subjects to which his Prophecy mainly relates, were Samaria and Jerusalem: The Capital Cities of the two Kingdoms of Israel and Judah after the Division of the Tribes; which made the principal Figure, and had the main Influence in both Nations.

THE Text seems particularly to point at Jerusalem. In the preceding Chapter, the Prophet describes a Siege, wherein the Judge of Israel should be smitten with a Rod upon the Cheek. Which seems to agree best with that Siege of Jerusalem by the King of Babylon, which is-
 Ch. v. 1.
 2 Kings xxv. 1, &c. su'd in unusual Indignities to King Zedekiah and his

his Family. The rest of that Chapter is taken up in encouraging Promises to good People in the midst of so dark a Prospect. But then here the Intimation given of Judgment approaching is renew'd. The People are expressly told, That GOD *had a Controversy with them*, ver. 2. And Expostulations us'd about their ungrateful and disingenuous Returns for Ver. 3, 4, ancient Favours of Providence. Hereupon 5. the Prophet supposes them touch'd with some Remorse, and apprehensive that there was a necessity of taking up this Controversy. Therefore they cast about in their Minds how they should make their Peace; *wherewith they should* Ver. 6, 7. *come before the LORD, and bow themselves before the high GOD?* In return to this Enquiry, we have first, the insufficient Suggestions of their own Thoughts upon it, and then the Prophet's express Answer. They were sensible something must be done; but their Affection to their Sins made any Expedient occur more readily than the right Course which they ought to take, of sincere Repentance and Reformation. *Shall I come before him with Burnt-offerings, with Calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul?* If External & Ceremonial Observances will suffice, these shall not be wanting. If their Sins may be spar'd, they can be content to make Commutation for 'em at the greatest Expence. But the Prophet instructs them better, and shews them the only effectual Way to avert GOD's Displeasure. *He* Ver. 8. *hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly,*
And

and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?

To second this Instruction and incline them to comply with it, he adds, as in the Text, *The LORD's Voice crieth to the City, &c.* "I am
 "not only sent to guide you in the right way,
 "but as a Herald to declare War against you
 "if you refuse Instruction. And God's Voice
 "speaks aloud to *Jerusalem* in that fore Calamity I have been commission'd to foretel.

AND the Man of Wisdom shall see thy Name. The Prophet in a Devotional Strain turning his Address from *Jerusalem* to GOD, expresses his Confidence, that some would take the Warning, would consider and adore GOD in it. In the Original 'tis only — *Wisdom shall see thy Name.* True Wisdom will infallibly direct to this, and all that are under the Conduct of it will actually be led to GOD by the Warning or by the Providence. And in the Apprehension he might have of Unsuccessfulness with many, this was a Relief to him, that he could hope in GOD he should not altogether labour in vain, but that *Wisdom would be justified of her Children.*

AND therefore he returns to his Duty as GOD's Messenger, to deliver a general Exhortation to all, whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear. *Hear ye the Rod, and who hath appointed it.*

I SHALL briefly set before you the Sum of the Text in a Doctrinal Way, and then apply the whole particularly to our present Circumstances.

I. THE

I. THE Voice of GOD sometimes in a more eminent manner cries to a City.

GOD speaks to Mankind by his Word, and by his Works. When *Wisdom cries, and Under- Prov. viii. standing puts forth her Voice*; when *she cries at the 1, 3. Gates, at the entry of a City, at the coming in at the Doors*: When the Instructions of Truth and Duty, the Promises and Threatnings contained in the Holy Scriptures are frequently and solemnly publish'd by GOD's Ministers to a People; They ought to consider GOD as speaking to them Words whereby they may be sav'd. *Jerusalem* of old had that Advantage beyond any other Place in the World. *God shewed his Pf. cxlvii. Word unto Jacob, his Statutes and his Judgments 19, 20. unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any Nation: and as for his Judgments, they have not known them.*

THE Works of GOD are another Way whereby He expresses Himself and his Mind to us. By these He speaks where the sound of his Word has never reach'd, so as to leave the Nations least privileg'd without Excuse. The standing Wonders of Creation and Providence, reach to all Times and Places: *There Psal. xix. is no Speech nor Language, where their Voice is not 3, 4. heard. Their Line is gone out thro' all the Earth, and their Words to the End of the World.* But while these claim universal Attention, there are Peculiarities of Providence by which GOD speaks with a special Emphasis to particular Persons or Places. Sometimes in a Language of Grace, leading Ingenuity to Repentance, when He prevents Men with the Blessings of Goodness. At other Times in a Language of Terror,

Terror, by sad Prefages of Evils to come, or by the Judgments which He executes. And frequently there is a Mixture of both together; so that those who observe his Works, must *sing of Mercy and of Judgment.*

THIS Voice of GOD *cries*; it is remarkably loud in some Instances above others. When the Mercies, or the Calamities, are very great and important; when the Agency of Providence in them is apparent in an uncommon Degree, it must be gross Stupidity indeed, to remain insensible of it.

BUT to whom is this Voice directed? *To the City*, says the Prophet. Now—

1. THIS bespeaks a peculiar Direction of it to one Place rather than another. That 'tis evidently pointed with a Mark of Distinction to *that City*. Indeed all that hear of an awful Providence, should think themselves so far concern'd in it as to take Warning. But there is a special Accent attending it, with reference to such as are touch'd immediately by it. That which comes nearest home to us we are to look upon as meant especially for us. In this Case Providence itself applies the Warning, and

Job. v. 27. *Marg.* calls us to *know it for ourselves*. When GOD singles out a Place for the Scene of His Judgments, and grants others an Exemption;

Am. iv. 7. when He causes it to *Rain upon one City* for its necessary Refreshment, but *not to rain upon another*, where it is equally wanted; certainly the Sufferers are more immediately call'd to be Learners. They have the Advantage of a stronger Impression to receive Good by it, and there—

therefore must be the more inexcusable if they refuse to hear. 'Tis therefore one of the greatest Aggravations of Obstinacy in a Sinful Course, if we ourselves have found the Bitterness of it by our own Experience. *Thou hast stricken them, (says the Prophet,) but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive Correction: they have made their Faces harder than a Rock they have refused to return.* If the Stroke then is directed to one City more than another, so in proportion is GOD's Voice by it. Especially this will be apparent, if 'tis not only distinguish'd from others by a single Stroke, but one Judgement is sent after another principally to affect that Place. Yet on the other hand,

2. THIS may import a general Admonition design'd by it to all in that Place. All the City may not be equally affected in the Calamity, and yet GOD's Voice cry to all the City. As in Punishments by the Hand of Civil Justice, so in those by the immediate Hand of GOD, the End is, That *all the people may hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously.* In National Judgements, tho' every particular Person may not have an immediate Share in them, yet GOD speaks to the whole Community. And within the narrower Circuit of a City, GOD's Voice has still a louder Cry to all in it; especially in some Circumstances. If the Calamity is very great and extensive, tho' it spreads not universally; if it reaches far, tho' several escape: If the Danger and Terror were general, tho' GOD in Sovereign Mercy prevented the Fears of Many; this certainly carries a Voice in it to All. Those that are

past over themselves, may have had Relations, or particular Friends and Acquaintance among the Sufferers: And as Affection in this Case will engage to Sympathy with them, so it binds under the Religious Obligations of the Providence. Or the Generality of a City may be affected in the Consequences of a Desolation, tho' they did not immediately feel it. If a large Stock of the Conveniences of Life is consum'd, 'tis a general Loss, and felt by all Ranks of People. If a Man of Substance who delighted to do good in his Place, be reduc'd to an Incapacity for farther Benefactions, many will feel the Hand of God, and should hear his Voice. If many Families are strip'd of All, and brought down from prosperous Circumstances to a low Condition, Humanity and Christianity make them Objects of Compassion and Relief to the rest. And thus God's Hand laid on part of a City will speak to the whole.

I PROCEED to the *second* Branch of the Text.

II. WHEN GOD's Voice cries to a City, those that are truly Wise will see his Name.

SOMETIMES those that have been stupid and insensible before, have been awaken'd by surprizing Providences, to bethink themselves, to regard the Operations of God's Hands, and give Glory to his Name. And abundant Reason they have for it. From the Nature and Tendency of the Thing, one would hope, that *when GOD's Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.*

IIa. xxvi.
9.

BUT

BUT Experience shews that that the most a-wakening Providences are not sufficient to rouse all out of their Stupidity. Many will still be Filthy, Prophane and Inconsiderate, tho' they see and feel the Judgments of God. 'Tis an Observation that holds true of the Generality in all Ages, GOD speaketh once, yea Job. xxxiii. 14. twice; yet man perceiveth it not. There are Prov. xxvii. 22. such Fools that tho' they should be brayed in a mortar, yet will not their Foolishness depart from them. Isa. xxvi. 11. When GOD's Hand is lifted up, they will not see.

BUT whatever others do, those that are truly Wise, that duly consider Things, that suffer themselves to be govern'd by Reason, and consult their own best Interests, will see God's Name in his Providences; they'll perceive it, and mind it, and give Him the Glory of it. *i. e.*

1. They'll discern and acknowledge God's Hand therein. They'll see his Name, *i. e.* They'll discern God in all. The Name of God in Scripture often signifies God himself. Most People suffer their Thoughts to dwell only on the Events themselves, or the visible Instruments and Means of them, and carry not their Eye to the great Spring that sets all going. They live without GOD in the World. Or if they coldly acknowledge a Concern of Providence in the matter, they lay little stress upon it, 'tis not the main Thing they mind. And the Reason is, they are govern'd by Sense; They look in this Case as in all others, mainly at that which is seen. But he that is truly Wise, in all Events will see Him that is invisible: He'll Heb. xi. discern and mainly fix the Eye of his Mind up- 27. on an unseen Hand of Providence ordering

and directing the whole. This will be uppermost in his Thoughts, *Is there Evil in a City, and the LORD has not done it?* Where Men act a vile and unjust Part in contributing to it, and it is in their Heart from a Principle of Cruelty and Ambition to destroy and cut off all they can; yet they are *the Rod of GOD's Anger, and the Staff in their Hand is his Indignation.* As to any Design of Men, the Calamity may be altogether Casual and Fortuitous; but that which we call Chance, is entirely under the Regulation of Providence. *A Sparrow falls not to the Ground without our Father.* Tho' it should have its Rise in second Causes from meer Negligence and Carelessness; yet a Superior Being has even that under his Management and Direction to serve his Purposes. Good Men live in the Belief of the Universal Government of GOD, and therefore mainly respect that in all Events.

2. THEY'LL endeavour to discern those Perfections which GOD displays in his Works, and give him the Glory of them. They will *see his Name*, i. e. his Glory, the Discoveries He design'd to make of Himself in a particular Providence. Since they consider GOD as the Supreme Agent, they know he acts like himself, and worthy of himself, and therefore will give him the Glory due to his Name as He has chosen to manifest his Excellencies. Has he made his mighty Power known, in the irresistible Force of his Judgments, or in pressing into his Service either reasonable Creatures, or insensible Elements for the Accomplishment of his Will? It will leave this Impression deep upon their Souls, *Great is our LORD and of great Pow-*

er. If his Hand in outward Distresses has fallen promiscuously upon the Evil and the Good, and many greater Offenders are spar'd, while Useful and Upright Men are involv'd in a Desolation; those that are Religiously Wise will Adore Divine Sovereignty, and acknowledge that God is not oblig'd to give Account of his Matters. As far as they can discover the Offences which pav'd the Way to a Judgment, they will give Glory to God by Confession, and say, *Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.* And when his Providences are Mysterious, they'll maintain this as a certain Conclusion, *Righteous art thou, O LORD,* tho' they may adventure with Humility to plead with Him. And while Others may overlook the Mercy intermix'd with Judgment, they'll glorify this endearing Attribute in the several Instances of it, which they can observe. They reckon themselves less than the least of God's Mercies, and therefore would not suffer any of them to be lost in Forgetfulness. They'll adore Him as in *Wrath remembering Mercy,* and as *punishing less than their Iniquities deserve.* Every gracious Allay, every seasonable Support, any Comfort continu'd, when others are withdrawn, will be ascrib'd to Sovereign Mercy.

THUS will they see his Name. And now---

III. 'Tis the Duty of all to hear the Rod, and who has appointed it.

TO hear the Rod, i. e. to mind it as that which claims their Attention. We are not to despise the chastening of the LORD. Heb. xii. 5.
When

Ezek. xii.
27.

Isa. v. 12.

When Evils are in prospect, prophane Men are ready to flight them, because they are apprehended at a Distance; as the House of *Israel* treated *Ezekiel's* Message, saying, *The Vision that he sees, is for many Days to come, and he prophesieth of the Times that are far off.* And when Judgments are inflicted, many are stupid enough to care for none of these Things, unless they feel them directly themselves: *They regard not the Work of the LORD, neither consider the Operation of his Hands.* But it concerns us seriously to apply our Thoughts to the Providences we are under. And thereupon—

To endeavour to discover what GOD would instruct us in thereby. The *Rod and Reproof* go together: And we should strive to find out what GOD intends especially to teach us by a particular Correction. What Sins he chiefly bears Testimony against; what Duties He would excite us to practice; what Light we may receive from it for our Assistance and Conduct in our Course.

AND in consequence of this, we are call'd to comply with the Design of GOD therein, as far as we can discover it: To hear the Rod with an *obedient Ear*. Hearing is often in Scripture taken for Obedience, and so we must certainly understand it here. All our Attention is in order to this.

BUT that which is to give the Rod its Weight and Efficacy, is, the Consideration *who has appointed it.* Under the Authority and Influence of this Thought, 'tis like to do us Good, and not otherwise. When we think that 'tis the

Cor-

Correction of One that does nothing in vain, but always acts for wise Ends; we shall see Reason to enquire, *Wherefore He contends with us?* Since 'tis the Discipline of a Holy GOD, the great Design of it must be to declare War against Sin, and bring us to Repentance. If He has undoubted Authority for all that He does; his Voice is not to be made light of. Especially if we take in the Benignity and Goodwill of Him that appoints our Lot, who uses not so much as a Rod, when there is no Occasion for it; and if that be necessary, chuses it rather than a Sword, as long as there is hope of a good Effect by it. Under such Apprehensions as these, a Sense both of Duty and Interest will command our Attention.

PROVIDENCE now leads us by the late Consuming Fire to a particular Application of this general Discourse. 'Tis no small Part of the Duty of Ministers, to explain and second GOD's Voice in his Works by the Instructions of his Word; when GOD's Voice cries, they ought to *cry aloud, and not spare*; and endeavour to *speak a Word in season*. Allow me therefore, in the Order of the Text, to assist and excite you to the Improvement of this Awful Event.

I. GOD's Voice herein, plainly cries to this City. This City eminently, which has been the Scene of so great a Desolation. We have scarce got over another unusual Visitation, which has principally affected this City and the Parts adjacent, GOD's more immediate Stroke upon the Cattle. Sure the Call of that has not been minded as it ought, when
for

for all this, we see *G O D's Anger is not turned away, but his Hand is stretched out still.* When this new Arrow is pointed at us, there can be no room for a Doubt to whom *G O D* speaks. And tho' He has not made our City one entire Heap and Ruin, yet we are all concern'd in the Admonition. The devouring Flames have never been suffer'd to make so great a Consumption here, since *G O D* permitted *Popish Treachery and Cruelty* to lay the greatest Part of it in Ashes. What a Heap of Rubbish appears, where stood the other Day many pompous Dwellings, and rich Store-houses! What a Collection of valuable Merchandizes for the supply of foreign Traffick or the Conveniencies of Life at home, have been made Fuel to the Flames, or are reduc'd to common Dust! But especially, how many Souls are suddenly snatch'd into Eternity, here and there a Life extinguish'd from one and another Quarter of the City! Others wounded and disabled, so as to be like to carry about with them all their Days the sad Memorials of this Destruction. Many of us have had our near Relations, our dear Friends and intimate Acquaintance, or our Correspondents in Secular Business, among the Sufferers. Such as have *gone up with us to the House of G O D*, or we have often convers'd with in the public Places of Resort, are either now no more in our World, or made Objects of Compassion to their Friends. At least, we had all our Share in the Terror of that Melancholy Night. If we were near, we saw the raging Element preying upon all in its Way, some of us the while in continual Fear when our own Dwellings should be laid in Ashes after the Pattern
of

of our Neighbours. Others, at a greater Distance, with Consternation saw the rapid Flight of so many kindled Sparks hurry'd on with Violence thro' the Air, and threatening a new Conflagration in many Quarters at once, where-ever they should meet with combustible Materials. And even those in the remotest Parts could not miss the dismal Signal of a ruddy Sky, awakening Apprehensions at first of Danger at their own Doors, and afterwards giving them Notice, that the Flames were proceeding in their Ravages, and still making nearer Approaches towards them. Few of us, I believe, at the Time, had so little Humanity, or even Confidence of our own Safety, as to think ourselves unconcern'd Spectators. May the Impression still remain, as a Foundation for all the pious Reflections it should produce, and the good Improvement to be made of it. Therefore——

2. LET us observe and adore G O D's Name in this Event. Tho' it might be owing at first (as Desolations of this Nature generally are) to the Negligence, rather than the Design, of those where it began; yet certainly we are oblig'd to consider a higher Hand in the Matter. There are innumerable Instances every Day in this Great City of a want of due Care, dangerous Experiments made, Remisness in unthinking Servants, and Fire under the Management of those that are unable to manage themselves: And yet, Thanks be to God, He does not make Use of this every Day to lay us waste. But whenever it takes Effect, we are to consider it as coming on His Errand, and then it accomplishes That for which He sends

it. We are to look upon it as a Designation of Providence, that it might have the louder Voice to all the City, that it broke out in one of the richest and the best-stor'd Corners, where the Damage would be greatest, and of the largest extent.

Nov. 27. ONE Circumstance, which principally contributed to the Progress and irresistible Force of the Flames, was more immediately the Hand of GOD; I mean, the Disposition and
1703. Violence of the Wind. In the Beginning of the last Reign, that Element was commission'd to spread a Desolation prodigiously greater, not only thro' this City, but over Land and Water, thro' the greatest Part of the Kingdom: And had the other Element only for its Attendant in terrifying Flashes of Lightning. Now an occasional Fire begins the Stroke, and the Wind is employ'd to second and add Strength to that. 'Tis remarkable that it should blow from a Corner where it must have the greater Force from the open Surface of the Water, and drive the Flames most directly upon Land, and that Part of the City where the greatest Treasures were lodg'd. That just when the Fire broke out, it should rise to an uncommon Violence, different from what had been felt for some Months past, and continue so long to baffle all the Endeavours us'd to quench it. These Circumstances are by no means to be esteem'd meer Chances, but the Regulations of Divine Providence. There is nothing more entirely out of the Disposal of Mankind than the Wind; for any thing they can do, *It bloweth where it listeth*. Nor is any Thing more directly assign'd to Providence in
Scripture.

Scripture. GOD is elegantly said, to *gather the Winds in his Fists*; as One that holds them in, Pr. xxx 4. or sends them out; at Pleasure. They are under his Direction where to go, and what to do. *Stormy Winds fulfill his Word*. And with Ps. cxlviii. the same Ease that He raises them, He stops⁸ them again in the midst of their impetuous Course. He *makes the Storm a Calm, so that the Waves of the Sea are still*. Suddenly makes Psal. cviii. 29. the Air serene and quiet after the most violent Agitation.

WHAT a lively Display does this give us of the mighty, the uncontrollable Power of the Great GOD! who has all the Powers of Nature, as well as of Reasonable Creatures, under his Direction; and can *make a Way* either to his *Anger*, or to his *Mercy*, by those Instruments, which will obey no other Orders. *Who knows the Power of his Anger? even according to his Fear, so is his Wrath*. Ps. xc. 11.

AND yet at the same Time, his Name as the LORD Merciful and Gracious, shines brightly too. He has not made a thorough End: But when He had taught us by the irresistible Success of the Flames for many Hours, that our whole City lay entirely at Mercy; *in measure he debated with it, stay'd his rough Wind, in the Day of the East-wind*. And (which is a Circumstance very fit to make his Mercy the more affecting) He laid the furious Tempest, just when the Fire had advanc'd so far as to be ready to seize a Street * of the most combustible

C 2

* Mark-Lane consisting principally of old Timber-Buildings.

Hof.xi.8.

tible Materials, and from whence it might justly have been expected that the Ruin would be spread into the Heart of the City. The Language of this seasonable Stop is exactly like that to Ephraim, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine Heart is turned within me, my Repentings are kindled together.* Many particular Persons have still more distinguishing Mercy to celebrate in this Affair; their Habitations are preserv'd, when those around them were laid in Ashes; their Lives given them for a Prey, when those within a few Steps of them perish'd in the Ruins. *Is one taken, and another left?* And shall the Survivor ever forget the distinguishing Goodness of God? And now —

3. LET me call you All to hear the Rod, considering who has appointed it. Since by this Providence the Temporal Concernments of many have receiv'd so much Prejudice, let us endeavour to bring *Meat out of the Eater*, and to have this sore Calamity made to work together to our Spiritual and Eternal Good. This Exhortation may be branch'd into three Particulars.

1. LET us all consider what Sins GOD would Reprove us for by this Stroke, and amend them. The GOD who *does not willingly afflict the Children of Men*, declares by this, that He has a Controversy with us. We are call'd therefore to *consider our Ways*. And Sin in general, whatever Conscience reproves us for, may have had a Hand in the Provocation, and there-

therefore should be repented of. But if any Sins should seem especially pointed at in the Nature or Circumstances of the Punishment, GOD expects a particular Sense of those, and an exprefs Resolution to forsake them. And may we not apprehend that in this Rich, this Busy City, GOD has seen in most, a very inordinate Love to the World, too eager a Pursuit after it, to the Exclusion of better Things; and that He would check this Worldly-mindedness, by breaking in upon so many Articles of our Trade? Should not many look upon it as an Admonition for their Luxury and Sensuality, when so much of that which uses to minister to those Lusts is consum'd? Has not the Security and Stupidity of most under the gentler Voice of GOD's Word, made so startling a Desolation necessary to awaken them? It may be you have too much Prided yourselves in your noble Trading River; like *Tyrus*, *had your Heart* Ezek. *lifted up, and said, I sit in the midst of the Seas: xxviii. 2, With my Wisdom, and with my Understanding I⁴ have gotten me Riches, and Gold and Silver into my Treasures.* And that therefore GOD has chosen to humble you this way; and to make that River itself, by which you are the Mart of many Nations, an Occasion of devouring faster so much of your Treasure. If GOD's Controversy be for these, or any other Iniquities, it will be our Wisdom to accomplish a diligent Search to find them out: Otherwise they are like to *find us out* in new Rebukes.

2. LET us lay to Heart and keep fresh in our Remembrance, the Instructive Lessons which

which are obvious in this Event. The more plain they are, and the more confirm'd by our Experience in other Cases; so much the more faulty must it be to over look them, or not to act under the continual Influence of them.

SEE here (and never forget it) your absolute Dependance upon GOD. That there is Nothing you can call your own in Opposition to His Claim, or farther than He gives and continues it. How easily could He have blasted your Endeavours in Trade and Business, and kept you Poor, tho' you *rose up early, and sat up late, and eat the Bread of Carefulness!* This you see is the Case of many of your Neighbours, who set out with as great Advantages and pursu'd them with as much Application as any of you. If your Riches have increas'd above others, always remember that you owe it more to *the Blessing of the LORD, than the Hand of the Diligent.* And when you have gain'd them, you are still as Dependent upon GOD as ever. Tho' there is a strange Proness in Human Nature to *forget GOD* when a Man has much in Possession; to *say in Prosperity I shall not be moved*: Yet learn from this Event to correct that vain Confidence, and with the firmest Persuasion to confess, *LORD, by thy Favour thou hast made my Mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy Face, and I was troubled.* You take all the prudent Precautions you can for your Security, and with a great deal of Reason. But no Bulwarks can be rais'd against Divine Assaults. That Truth is written upon this Desolation, as with the point of a Diamond, *Except the LORD watch the City,*

Psal. xxx.
6, 7.

Pscxxvii.
1.

in

in vain does the Watch-man watch. You have such Provisions here to prevent the Progress of a Fire, as are scarce in any Part of the Kingdom besides; The Seat of it was near the Water. But what could stand before the powerful Voice of God in the stormy Wind! How did that baffle all Opposition, till He mitigated His own Hand!

LEARN hence the Uncertainty of Time to come. What a surprizing Change was made in the Circumstances of many Persons and Families in a very short Time! Many hurried into Eternity, without room for a single Thought: Others left without a Place to lay their Head, who but a little before had plentiful Accommodations for themselves and their Friends; and strip'd of that in an Instant, which they had been many Years in gathering.

Boast not thy self then of to Morrow; for thou knowest not what a Day (what an Hour) may bring forth. You have no certain Tenure either for your Life, or your Substance for an Hour to come. *Go to now, ye that say, To Day or to morrow we will go into such a City, and continue there a Year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the Morrow; for what is your Life? It is even a Vapour that appeareth for a little Time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the LORD will, we shall live, and do this or that.* Prov. xxvii. 1. Jam. iv. 13, 14, 15.

SEE here (and firmly believe) the Vanity of earthly Treasures. Are these Things fit to be made our Portion, which may so soon become our Grief? *Things which Moth and Rust may corrupt, where Thief may break thro' and steal,* Matt. vi. 19.

or

or Fire soon approach to devour? You lay up this for your Support in old-Age; you toil and labour now, in hopes of more Ease then. But your Strength may be cut off in the midst of your Way, or the Fruit of all your Labours fail you by a sudden Sweep of Providence. How much fitter is that to be made our Portion, which will stand us in stead in both Worlds, in all Ages of Life, in every Condition and Circumstance; and which we *cannot be separated from by Tribulation, or Distress, or Persecution, or Famine, or Nakedness, or Peril, or Sword!* Dost Luk. xii. thou say, *Soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for* 19, 20. *many Years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry? Thou Fool, hear what GOD may say, and tells thee by this Providence He can easily make good, This Night thy Soul shall be required of thee, or thy Goods shall be taken from thee; and then, What is become of thy Portion?*

To add no more, Learn from this Rod of Correction the Danger of new Rebukes after the most Signal Mercies. We have been surpriz'd with the peaceable Establishment of our Religion and Liberties contrary to our own Fears, and the Hopes of our Enemies. It may be we have been too ready on this Foundation to conclude that we had no more to fear; that we were the Darlings of Providence, the *Bitterness of Death was past*, and a God so favourably dispos'd towards us, would never forsake us or turn to be our Enemy. Possibly upon this Instance of Sovereign Mercy, we are become less solicitous to keep upon good Terms with GOD, than we were in the Apprehension of Danger to all that was dear to us, and have presum'd upon the Continuance of Divine Favour without

out any more ado. If this has been our Case, we may see here a just Confutation of our vain Confidence, that the Clouds may return after the Rain, and *our Iniquities still separate between* Isa. lix. 2. *us and our G O D, and our Sins hide his Face from us*: That He is not so attach'd to the Interests of any People, as to forbear new Tokens of his Displeasure, if they despise his Goodness, and *turn again to Folly*. The People of *Israel* remain a standing Example for the Admonition of all Ages. In their early Days, G O D *delivered them for his Name's Sake*: But when they *forgot his Works*, envy'd their Deliverers, and liv'd not up to the Design of G O D's Benefits; He soon visited them with a new Scourge, and made them sensible they were still a People upon Behaviour. This was the Method of Providence with them, as long as they continu'd a People. You have the Sum of their History to this purpose, in *Psal. cvi.* where Repentance and Deliverance, Revolts and new Judgments, appear in a continu'd Succession.

SUCH Thoughts as these, thoroughly inlaid in our Minds, will make the sharpest Rod an Advantage, and evidence that our Ear is open to Discipline.

3. LET us engage in the Practice of those Duties which such a Providence calls us to.

WE should all be excited by it, to *seek first the Kingdom of G O D, and his Righteousness*. Matt. vi. Then we shall have something sure in the Instability of our outward Comforts. At present that Peace within, which as the World cannot give, so it cannot take away: And a *Treasure laid up in Heaven, which Moth and Rust cannot corrupt, where Thief cannot break* ver. 20.

D

thro'

thro' and steal, or devouring Flames approach. If God and Christ, and Heaven, be ours, the Substance of our Happiness will remain untouch'd by those Disasters which affect our Secular Affairs most deeply. Our Bodies are Houses of Clay, whose Foundation is in the Dust. The Places of our Sojourning are of fading Materials, they may soon be laid in Ashes, or we turn'd out of Possession: How much are we concern'd then to make Provision, that if we fail, we may be receiv'd into everlasting Habitations. Labour not so much for meat which perisheth, as for that which endures to everlasting Life. Amidst your eager Pursuits after Things which you may never obtain with all your Pains, or may lose in a Moment or have imbitter'd to you by a Thousand Occurrences, forget not the One thing needful, the One Thing durable and certain: But above all your Gettings get Understanding.

Jo. vi. 27.

LIVE in the Expectation of Changes. Nothing endangers our Innocence or the Peace of our Minds in any Alteration of our Condition so much as the Surprise of it. Our Hearts are overwhelm'd with Sorrow, and our Passions apt to break out with great unruliness upon shocking Events, when we have liv'd without Apprehensions of any such thing, and quite put the

Am. vi. 3. *evil day far from us.* If we would accustom our selves while we are in the Possession of our Comforts, to consider that they are all fading and precarious; and learn to be abas'd while we are in Prosperity; This would break the Force of the Temptation when it comes, and furnish us with an habitual Preparation for all Events.

Phil. iv. 12.

BE always ready for your great Change. Mat xxiv. This is the Language of CHRIST in general, and

and of this Providence in particular, where so many without previous Warning pass from Time to Eternity. By this I mean not only a general Concern that our State be good ; but frequent actual Thoughts of Death approaching, and such a Uniform Course of Faith and holy Obedience maintain'd, as that *we may not be asham'd at our LORD's Coming*. That we be not only Virgins who have Oyl in their Lamps, but that *our Lamps shine and our Loins are girt, as those that look for the Bridegroom*. That even sudden Death may not be a Surprize to us.

BE perswaded to do all the Good you can, while you are in a Capacity for it. Defer not (as many do) the present use of your Talents, for the Service of God and your Generation, on a Design of some Benefactions when you come to die. 'Tis best to *honour God with your Substance, and to do good in your Life* : And that for this Reason among others, because otherwise you know not whether you shall be able to do it at all. How many, that have satisfy'd themselves, and quieted their Consciences in the present omission of their Duty by Promises of future Usefulness, have found themselves disappointed ! Since they would not be *rich towards God*, nor allow the World to be the better for them while they were intrusted with much ; GOD has righteously taken it away from them, and reduc'd 'em to need others good Offices. Therefore *whatever your Hands find to do, do it with your Might*. De- Chap. ix. vote not all you have to sensual Gratifications, nor be content to live to yourselves now ; but *lay up in Store a good Security for the Time to come* with your *uncertain Riches* ; as not knowing whether GOD will give you leave to ho-

Eccles. iii.
12.

Chap. ix.
10.

1 Tim. vi.
19.

nour him, or be Benefactors to the World with them, unless you discharge your Trust now. Solomon's Counsel is loudly proclaim'd by this Providence; *Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine Hand to do it: Say not to thy Neighbour, Go and come again, and to Morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.*

Prov. iii. 27, 28. *Rejoyce with Trembling* in your present Mercies, whether private or publick. Remember the Character of the World you sojourn in, and carry towards it's Enjoyments accordingly.

Pfal. ii. 10. *It remaineth, that they that have Wives, be as tho' they had none; and they that weep as tho' they wept not; and they that rejoyce as tho' they rejoyc'd not; and they that buy as tho' they possessed not; and they that use this World as not abusing it: For the Fashion of this World passeth away.* And in the Blessings of a publick Nature, such Events as these are fit to qualify and regulate our Joy. We are call'd by the kind Providence of God, and by Publick Authority in this ensuing Week to *rejoyce in the gladness of our Nation* for one of the greatest Blessings that God has ever favour'd it with, that the *Protestant Succession* has happily taken Effect, and a *Popish Pretender* has not been able to lay that Yoke upon us which neither We nor our Fathers were able to bear. That Man would be altogether unworthy of such a Deliverance as this, and shew himself of a base and narrow Spirit, Ungrateful to God, and Disaffected to his Countrey, that has no Relish for so extensive a Benefit, because this more private Calamity has fallen out lately; even tho' he should himself have been a considerable Sufferer in it. The Mercy and the Chastisement bear no proportion

portion to one another. On the one Hand all that's dear to us is concern'd: Religion and Liberty, Trade and Property must have been involv'd in one General Ruin, if a Popish Successor had been let in upon us, devoted to the Interests of *Rome*, and fully instructed in all the Measures of Arbitrary Power. The Flames of *Smith-field*, or a *whole City in Flames* is what Experience has taught us we might justly expect from that Religion in Power. But here we have fallen into the Hands of a Merciful G O D, and not into the Hands of Men, whose *Tender-mercies are cruel*. He has brought us under a mild Instance of his own Discipline, and is securing us at the same Time from the Efforts of those that desire our entire Ruin. And yet this Incident of Providence may be instructive to us even in our publick Joy. To guard us against such Expressions of it as would be new Provocations to G O D, in criminal Sensuality instead of Religious Thankfulness. To prevent us from terminating our Joy meerly in the agreeable Aspect of our Affairs, and engage us principally to Glory in that Divine Favour which has wrought Salvation for us. And to intermix an awful Fear of the Great G O D with all our Satisfaction; lest we should relapse in to the same Sins which occasion'd our former Dangers; forget God's Works, or forfeit his Protection, or interrupt the happy Fruits which he seems to promise us in such Beginnings of Sovereign Mercy.

S U C H Duries as these the Voice of God in this Calamity speaks to us all in Common. I shall close all with suggesting the Call of God in it more particularly to two Sorts.

1. To

1. To those that have had an immediate Share in it. As they are peculiarly concern'd in all the good Use fit to be made of it ; so the present Duty they are eminently call'd to is, Submission to the Divine Correction. *Hear ye the Rod, to this purpose, and who has appointed it. If the Rod itself, for the present is not Joyous but Grievous ; yet remember in whose Hand it is. The God who has a Right to do what He will with His own Creatures, whose Infinite Wisdom knows better what is good for Man in this Life, than he does himself : Who is Righteous in all His Ways, and Holy in all His Works. Who has adjusted every Circumstance, and has becoming Ends in it. Who can Support you under it ; and if you behave as you ought, can yet Bless your Latter End (as he did Job's) more than your Beginning. Let this Thought therefore work you up to David's Temper, I was dumb, and opened not my Mouth, because thou didst it : Or Job's, The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away ; blessed be the Name of the LORD.* You should indeed be Solicitous to discern wherefore He contends with you : You especially should not retain any Sin He declares against. But if upon Enquiry, you can entertain Hopes that you make a common Practice of no Evil Way, and desire to Repent of every known Offence ; yet countenance no hard Thought of Divine Providence, but adore the Sovereignty of it. and bow down before the LORD your Maker. Fix your Trust and Confidence in that Divine Power and Goodness which have brought you hitherto, spar'd your Lives, when he has consum'd your Substance, or preserv'd to you a good Part of That, when He might have strip'd you of the Whole.

2. To

Job xlii.

12.

Pf. xxxix.

9.]

Job i. 21.

2. To such as have been exempted from the immediate Influence of this Stroke.

BESIDES the Use you are concern'd to make of such a Providence in your Neighbourhood, in which I have been endeavouring your Assistance; and that Thankfulness to GOD for which Deliverance from so threatening a Danger loudly calls; there is one Duty which the Sufferings of your Fellow-Citizens, and your own Safety laid together make peculiarly yours. And that is to compassionate the Sufferers with that Tenderness which Humanity and Christianity call for.

I HOPE none of you will indulge a Censorious Temper upon this Occasion, as if it must be necessarily true that they were greater Sinners than their Neighbours, because they were the particular Sufferers. If a Man be struck dead in an Act of notorious Sin, or when there is a plain distinction of Crimes to be observ'd in those that fall under the Hand of GOD from the Character of those that escape it; without doubt this may be modestly observ'd by a pious Mind; for GOD is sometimes *known by the* Ps. ix. 16. *Judgments which He executes.* But the greatest Caution ought to be us'd in this matter, lest we offend against Charity, and boldly intrude into the Divine Secrets. Nothing but plain and notorious Evidence will justify us in such Reflections. Generally *no Man knoweth Love and Hatred* by these things. But *there is one E-* Eccl. ix. *vent to the Righteous and the Wicked.* Our ^{1, 2.} LORD carefully represses this barbarous Disposition of Judging Men's State and Character by their outward Circumstance.

THIS ought not so to be, my Brethren; but 'tis your Duty to *pity them*, as those whom *the*
Hand

Hand of GOD has touched. Earnestly to pray for them; to do all Offices of Humanity towards them; by no means to bear hard on any whose Circumstances by this Event may not allow them to answer, or not so entirely, or speedily, their Engagements to you. To use Severity or Roughness with honest Men on such an Occasion, would be to fly in the Face of Providence. We should all be ready to Relieve those that are in Necessity, and that with a Liberal Hand according to our Ability. In a Word, we should make their Case our own, put their Souls in our Souls stead; and then govern ourselves by that one Rule of our Saviour, which will engage us to all that Compassion and Kindness which they can reasonably wish for, or GOD expects at our Hands: *All Things, whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

Matt. vii.
12

IF GOD by his Grace enable us thus to attend to the Voice of this Rod, that he has us'd in the midst of all our Mercies, and to obey the Call of it in general, and according to our particular Circumstances; we may confidently expect that GOD will soon make us to forget our Sorrows by *commanding Salvation for our City instead of Walls and Bullwarks: That our wast-places shall be built; He will raise up the Foundations of many Generations: be call'd, The Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Paths to dwell in; And that Glory shall still dwell in our Land.*

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